







1870  
LEFT TO RIGHT A. O. BROWN, A. W. PAUL, R. CORNISH,  
THE AUTHOR, J. A. BOURDILLON.  
RECRUITS FOR THE BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE, 1870.

# INDIA'S HOPE

By

FRANCIS HENRY SKRINE, F.R.HIST.S.,

*Indian Civil Service (Retired).*



W. PILL, R. G. V. S.  
COLLON.  
CIVIL SERVICE, 1873.

LONDON:

W. THACKER & CO., 2 CREED LANE, E.C.4

CALCUTTA and SIMLA: THACKER, SPINK & CO.



I DEDICATE THIS VINDICATION OF THE BENGALI  
CHARACTER TO SIR R. N. MOOKERJEE



## PREFACE

THIS little book is mainly a defence of the educated Bengalis, who are styled "Bhadralók" in their vernacular speech and "Babus" in Anglo-Indian parlance. It has, however, a wider application. There is a remarkable identity of racial character and culture in the Intelligentsia throughout India; the Kayasthas of Bihar, the Maratha Brahmins of the Madras Presidency and the Parsis of Bombay closely resemble the Bengali Babus, and like them have been the target for many a poisoned shaft. Moreover, the great Aryan family includes no "superior," no "inferior" races. Civilisation is largely a question of physical environment, and the most advanced race has not cast the slough left by past stages of social growth. Conversely, I have used the adjective "English" to denote the British element in the population of our far-flung Empire. My initial chapters are necessarily based on personal experience. I wished to contrast the political status of Indians in the past and at the present day, in view of showing the vast improvement which half a century has brought. The English have put forth



## PREFACE

their utmost efforts to make the Self-denying Ordinance of 1919 a reality ; and they may legitimately expect an equal degree of loyalty in their Indian partners.

Many tremendous problems await solution ; but the increasing pressure of population is the crux of India's economic situation. This burning question is dealt with in a recently published Appendix to the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. Irrigation and modern science have decupled the production of food, but every improvement is " sooner or later neutralised by an increase of population." A final catastrophe is, indeed, adumbrated in the Commissioner's query :

Whether ultimately the standard of living will break under the stress of population, or whether some conscious check will be imposed for maintaining intact the standard of living ?

Nature, " red of tooth and claw," redresses the balance by means of war, pestilence and famine. All these have been eliminated in British India, but the " conscious effort " which strives to adjust numbers to resources is still to seek. The inference is that the appalling poverty of the masses in every province arises from their lack of foresight, and not from the " exploitation " charged by extremists against the British regime. It

## PREFACE

follows, too, that the realisation of "India's Hope" for a prosperous future depends on co-operation between all who love her, irrespective of their birth and creed. In my concluding chapters I have endeavoured to dispel the prejudice and rebut the calumny which now render that ideal impossible of attainment.

FRANCIS H. SKRINE.

147 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

*December 1928.*

\* \* \* The substance of this book has appeared in the *Calcutta Review* for June, August and October, 1928.



# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
CALCUTTA MEMORIES - - - -	I

## CHAPTER II

RURAL BENGAL IN THE 'SEVENTIES -	16
----------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III

THE EXPANSION OF ENGLAND - -	28
------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER IV

THE BENGALI INTELLIGENTSIA - -	37
--------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER V

SOME DETRACTORS, LORD MACAULAY AND MISS KATHERINE MAYO - -	48
---	----

## APPENDIX

THE AUTHOR AND HIS PANTHER, 1877 - - - - -	56
---	----



## ILLUSTRATIONS

RECRUITS FOR THE BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE,	
1870	- - - - -
THE AUTHOR AND HIS PANTHER, 1877	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	56



# CHAPTER I

## CALCUTTA MEMORIES

Voyage to Calcutta in 1870 ; Lisbon, Gibraltar, Malta, and Alexandria ; Cleopatra's Needle ; by rail to Suez ; the old s.s. *Candia* ; rats ! ; Galle and Madras ; the River Hughli a disappointment ; arrival at Garden Reach : a dethroned Sovereign's diversions ; reception by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal ; first impressions of Calcutta ; luxuries of the Gorgeous East ; the Tudor Ice Company ; Palanquins and Ticca Garis ; the European quarter ; some Chauringhi mansions ; Lord Macaulay ; an exceptional Anglo-Indian family ; dramatic reappearance of Mr. Pattle's corpse ; the Maidan ; splendid sailing-ships in the Hughli ; the fate of an old Arab captain ; Calcutta carriage folk : its northern streets, a suggestive odour ; possible return to jungle.

ONE of the few privileges of old age lies in the fact that a man who has reached life's evening can find relief from its inevitable miseries by looking down a long vista of past events. My recollections of Calcutta's external aspect in 1870 are extremely vivid, and I am fain to believe that many will be interested in the impressions which it left on the mind of a British lad. Prior to the Mutiny of 1857, India was a close preserve for nominees of the East India Company and a limited mercantile class. That cataclysm lifted a corner of the



veil ; but thirteen years later India was still unknown to the English public. The voyage thither was expensive, and tourist agencies confined their operations to Europe. Thanks to railways, turbine steamers, motor-cars and aeroplanes the world has shrunk to comparatively small dimensions ; but these devices have robbed foreign travel of the glamour which clung to it in the Victorian era.

The Call of the East was keenly felt by eight young civilians who left Southampton for Alexandria on August 4th, 1870, in a P. and O. paddle-steamer of 1,800 tons. The Bay of Biscay did not belie its sinister reputation, and we were all prostrated by sea-sickness until our storm-tossed vessel anchored in the Tagus, to deliver mails for Portugal ; railway communications having been interrupted by the Franco-Prussian war. On regaining our sea-legs we gazed with awe on the frowning Rock of Gibraltar, honeycombed with batteries which were even then obsolete. Malta was our next port of call ; and there, for the first time, passengers were allowed to set foot on shore. So my companions and I chartered carriages for a trip across the island to Verdala Palace, the Governor's summer retreat, which seemed an oasis of verdure set in a wilderness of stones and stunted olive-trees. We were

glad to leave our crowded ship at Alexandria, which contained nothing of interest except an Egyptian obelisk known as "Cleopatra's Needle." It now adorns the Thames Embankment, but then lay on the Mediterranean shore, half buried in sand. The Suez Canal had recently been inaugurated by the Empress of the French, but was not ready to receive traffic. It behoved us, therefore, to cross the Desert by rail; and my only recollection of the journey relates to an infamous meal of goat's flesh and tepid beer which was served at the junction for Cairo.

At Suez the P. and O. steamer *Candia* lay ready to convey us to Calcutta. I must describe that vessel in some detail, if only to illustrate the revolution in naval architecture which has taken place. She was an iron screw-steamer of 2,000 tons, and had been launched in 1845. Her plates were enormously thick; and I was not surprised to learn in after years that the *Candia* was sailing between England and Australia, after the removal of her engines. The change was not so radical as it would seem; for the stout old *Candia* was schooner-rigged, and hoisted sail in a fair wind. Her build did not differ materially from that of Elizabethan craft. The stern was topped by a lofty poop, with a range of hen-coops on either

side. Beneath this superstructure lay the saloon. Being situated at an extremity of the ship, it was very lively in bad weather; and our meals were often interrupted by sounds of woe issuing from the adjacent cabins. Forward of the saloon there revolved a huge wooden wheel armed with steel cogs which operated others on the screw-shaft. The "Multiplying Wheel," as it was termed, prevented the screw from "racing" when the vessel pitched, but the loss of power involved led to its supersession by a more effectual device. A dread of fire, inherited from the days of wooden ships, relegated smokers to a tent rigged up on deck. Here they were supplied with live charcoal by a Bengali lad who came in answer to shouts of "Chokra!" The commissariat on board the *Candia* was lavish if somewhat coarse. One "saw one's dinner" in the days of Queen Victoria, i.e., every course appeared on the table at the same time. A conspicuous feature was great joints of beef and mutton which the ship's butcher produced from animals awaiting their destiny in pens. Port, sherry and strong beer were included in the bill of fare, and passengers could procure a "peg" (always of brandy) by merely signing a chit. Although the *Candia* was anything but a floating hotel we accepted the discom-

forts of life at sea as inevitable. The rigid discipline of to-day was unknown, and officers mingled freely with passengers. Concerts and amateur theatricals kept people busy, and the younger folk indulged in bolster-fights after dark. The *Candia* swarmed with cockroaches, and rats sometimes visited the saloon, though they generally kept to the second-class quarters, an inferno in the ship's bowels, inhabited by poor Europeans and Eurasians. As far as I recollect no Indians were included in the passenger-list.

Apropos of rats, our friendly Purser told me a story illustrating their communal habits. During a previous voyage he was awakened in the dead of night by a quartermaster, who informed him that the rats were having high jinks below. The pair crept barefooted into the hold, where they heard a warbling as of the song of many small birds. The space that lay between the cargo and the bulkhead above was lit by a swinging lantern. When the intruders' eyesight had accommodated itself to its feeble light, they saw several hundred rats ranged in a ring. In the central space a huge specimen sat up, casting agonised glances on every side. Suddenly, the chatter ceased: the whole crowd fell upon the culprit and devoured him.

Galle was in those days the port of call for Ceylon. Our ship deftly threaded the rocks in its tortuous harbour, and passengers were allowed to land for a drive. I shall never forget the gorgeous tropical vegetation which delighted our eyes after a month's confinement. Madras was our next halting-place. The pier which now renders it accessible in

## INDIA'S HOPE

most weathers had no existence, and communications with the shore were maintained by a fleet of clumsy Masula boats. The prospect of being drenched in the surf kept most of us on board. Here we parted with the brightest member of our band. He was a Londoner of infinite humour, who subsequently blew his brains out in the despair engendered by life in a remote station.

We arrived at the Sandheads on the thirty-fourth day from Southampton, and the *Candia* hove to for a pilot. He came on board from the Pilot brig ; a haughty personage wearing white kid gloves, who superseded our Captain during the perilous voyage up the Hughli. That famous river disappointed us greatly ; its low banks, fringed with jungle, seemed but a sorry approach to the gorgeous East ; nor did the yarns told by seasoned passengers, of tiger-haunted Sagar Island and the danger of capsizing on the treacherous " James and Mary Sands " tend to raise our drooping spirits. They revived when the *Candia* steamed slowly past a line of mansions embowered in lofty trees. Garden Reach had once been the choicest residential suburb of Calcutta ; but grandees deserted it when four of the largest houses were allotted to the ex-King of Oudh and his retainers. Here the dethroned sover-

eign used to employ his ample leisure in composing Urdu verse and watching the graceful flight of a flock of pigeons. Here, too, the P. and O. depot was situated, and our long journey ended when the *Candia* made fast to the wharf. We shook hands warmly with her officers, none of whom did I ever see again, and our fellow-passengers were too busy to think of bidding us farewell. Such as had relatives or friends in waiting were whisked away in carriages to enjoy Calcutta's boundless hospitality; the less fortunate, myself included, drove to the Great Eastern Hotel, which was then dubbed "Wilson's," after its enterprising founder.

On the morrow, my colleagues and I gathered at a dilapidated house in northern Chauringhi which did duty for a Home Office, in order to learn the stations to which we were posted as Assistant Magistrate-Collectors. Then we trooped to Belvedere, with a view of paying our respects to the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir William Grey, who gave us a formal reception.

The present generation must find some difficulty in imagining Calcutta without Docks, pure water, scientific drainage, motor-cars, autobuses, tram-lines, electricity, and the other conveniences which render life in the

## INDIA'S HOPE

tropics more than tolerable. Bishop Heber wrote, in his delightful *Diary of a Residence in India*: "People talk of the luxuries of the East, but the only luxuries I am aware of are cold air and cold water—when one can get them." Half a century later things were but little better in this respect. The ministrations of a sleepy punkah-coolie were far less efficient than an electric fan, and the supply of ice was precarious. In the good Bishop's time wealthy Europeans cooled their claret with ice skimmed from shallow pans set out at night during the cold weather. In the 'twenties, however, an enterprising American made his fortune by cutting huge blocks from the frozen surface of a lake near Boston and exporting them to Calcutta, where they were stored in a massive edifice in Hare Street. As the precious commodity arrived per sailing ship, stocks were apt to run short at the hottest season. In such case every subscriber received a notice that ice would be supplied only to hospitals. In the 'sixties of last century a method was discovered of manufacturing ice cheaply by machinery, and several plants for that purpose arrived in Calcutta. Each was bought up and sent back by the powerful Tudor Ice Company; but its monopoly could not be

## CALCUTTA MEMORIES

sustained, and the Small Cause Court now stands on the site of the Calcutta Ice House.

My last morning in Calcutta was spent in a tour of inspection, for which purpose I had to choose between a "palki" and a "ticca garia." The former, each with its quartet of Urian bearers, abounded in the purlieus of Government House; they were cheap, but slow. Ticca garis, *alias* licensed cabs, were ranged in three categories. Those of the first class were conspicuous by their absence, and rumor had it that the term was applied to funeral carriages. The second-class ticca was stoutly constructed, but cleaner than the London four-wheeled cab of that epoch. Ticcas belonging to the third class were rickshaw-like contraptions drawn by half-starved ponies whose eyes betrayed their unutterable anguish. Hailing a second-class ticca I managed to make the "Coachwán" understand that I wished to be driven about the streets for a couple of hours.

Calcutta was called the "City of Palaces" owing to the long line of stuccoed mansions which faced the Maidan. Bishop Heber said that the general effect reminded him of St. Petersburg, but I saw a closer likeness between Chauringhi and London's Park Lane. Many a house in that famous thoroughfare has



## INDIA'S HOPE

associations which should be snatched from oblivion. The Bengal Club house, for instance, has replaced one occupied in the 'thirties by Thomas Babington Macaulay, who accepted the appointment of Legal Member of Council with the avowed object of saving money. An old Anglo-Indian with whom I foregathered in the *Candia* remembered him perfectly, and told me that the great man was noted for his parsimony. He narrated other happenings in Macaulay's brief Indian career, which led me to doubt the justice of the virulent attack on Bengalis which I had read in his essay on Warren Hastings. Long after my retirement from the Indian Civil Service I met an elderly Colonel named Macaulay, whose days were spent in playing golf. After telling me that he was the historian's nephew, he said :

A couple of years before Uncle Tom's death he summoned me to his chambers in Piccadilly, and addressed me as follows : " I have asked you to come here, my boy, in order to tell you some facts bearing on your future career. I am soon to become a Peer of the Realm, and Her Majesty the Queen has been pleased to give me permission to insert the name of a blood-relative in the remainder. You are my brother's only son, and have *primâ facie* a right to carry on my title. But my Indian savings have been sunk in an annuity ; I shall not leave you anything to speak of and, as far as I can judge, you are not likely to earn an income sufficient to support a Peerage. So instead of being a prospective Member of the House of Lords, you shall have a cadetship in the Indian army."

## CALCUTTA MEMORIES

Ten years after Lord Macaulay's departure another house in Chauringhi was tenanted by the Pattle family. Its head, the senior member of the Board of Revenue, was a morose old person who lay under the imputation of having killed his man in a duel. Mrs. Pattle, however, was brilliantly clever, and her bevy of beautiful daughters brought every gilded youth to her house. There were many sore hearts in Calcutta when news arrived that two of the sirens had become Peeresses. The ladies of this family must have been exceptionally endowed, for the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, used to say that "mankind consisted of men, women and Pattles." A tragedy attended their departure from India. Old Mr. Pattle—he had come out as a writer during the eighteenth century—was gathered to his fathers. In pursuance of his death-bed injunctions, Mrs. Pattle had his body embalmed, and sailed for England with the coffin safely stored in the ship's hold. On the third day from the Sandheads a dead calm was encountered, and a poisonous odour pervaded the decks. It soon became evident that the embalmer had scamped his ghastly work, and the offending coffin was committed to the deep with hurried funereal rites. Next morning, however, the Indiaman still lay "like a

## INDIA'S HOPE

painted ship upon a painted ocean," and Mr. Pattle's coffin was seen floating serenely close to the stern windows! His widow never recovered from the shock caused by his reappearance.

Although I had been taught to consider London the finest city in the world, I was forced to admit that Hyde Park could show nothing comparable with Fort William, Government House, the tropical foliage of the Eden Gardens, or the forest of masts which fringed the majestic Hughli. No other port in the world could boast of such splendid specimens of nautical architecture; the display was unique and will never recur. There they lay, tier upon tier, ranging from the Liverpool three-master of as many thousand tons down to the graceful opium-clipper gauging a third of that burden. The "country ships" which traded with the Persian Gulf and Burma were even more interesting. That many of them had ploughed the main as Indiaman was evidenced by their lofty sides and their spacious portholes from which cannon had once protruded. They carried lascar crews, and were often commanded by an Arab, who was styled "Nacoda." One of these ancient craft, re-named *Futteh Islam*, was wrecked at the head of the Bay of Bengal.

## CALCUTTA MEMORIES

Her crew, however, came ashore in their boats, and as soon as weather permitted they set to work salving the timber with which the *Futteh Islam* had been laden, operations being directed by the Nacoda. Teak is heavier than sea-water, and the pile on which he stood was set in motion by the rising tide. He lost his balance, and both legs were pinned between two enormous beams. The crew launched boats in the hope of extricating their captain, but all their efforts were in vain. Despite the agony caused by his crushed limbs, the plucky old man shouted instructions regarding the disposal of his property. Inch by inch rose the remorseless tide ; wave after wave swept over his head and set his long white beard afloat. When they emerged, he continued gasping out injunctions until his voice was stilled for ever.

In the mid-Victorian era a procession of perfectly appointed carriages used to parade in London in Hyde Park every fine afternoon between May and July. The Calcutta Maidan offered a similar spectacle, but herein the resemblance between the two cities was superficial. The Viceroy's carriage, with its escort of red-coated lancers, and those of three or four Indian millionaires, might possibly have passed muster in Hyde Park ; but few indeed

## INDIA'S HOPE

of the other vehicles which thronged the Red Road would bear a close inspection. In fact every Calcutta *mem-sahib* of 1870 made a point of lolling in a carriage and pair between 4 and 6 p.m. Her vanity often meant short commons at home, and its tangible results were decidedly unimpressive.

After exhausting the European quarter, I drove through Northern Calcutta, where half a million Indians lived and moved and had their being. There my nostrils were assailed by the smell of tobacco smoke, burnt cow-dung, rancid *ghi*, fish being cooked with oil, and outlandish spices. Many years later I encountered the self-same odour in the bazars of Bokhara. At once a vision arose of crowded streets sweltering under a tropical sun; of flimsy shops exhibiting piles of sticky sweetmeats and Manchester piece-goods; of women poising earthen pots on their graceful heads; of half-naked coolies staggering under their burdens; of creaking bullock-carts and ticca garis crammed with Babus clad in spotless white. I cannot but think the close connection between the olfactory nerves and the memory-cells might be utilised in educating children.

Calcutta left a deep and lasting impression on my mind. Young people seldom look be-

## CALCUTTA MEMORIES

yond external things ; I gave no thought to the tragedies that must have been enacted in its sumptuous mansions, or to the vice, misery and disease which cling to every great city. But, remembering Macaulay's New Zealander, who would perchance survey the ruins of St. Paul's Cathedral from a broken arch of London Bridge, I closed my eyes and fancied Calcutta sinking back into the swamps of the Gangetic Delta, and the Ochterlony Column emerging from a wide expanse of jungle. Verily

Earth buildeth on earth castles and towers,  
Earth saith unto earth, " All shall be ours."

## CHAPTER II

### RURAL BENGAL IN THE 'SEVENTIES

Townsmen and country folk ; Ditchers and Mofussilites ; The English monopoly of superior appointments resented by Indians ; Origin of the Congress movement ; Covenanted Civilians ; Haileybury Men and Competition-Wallahs ; the Uncovenanted Services ; Infamous roads ; William the Kunkeror ; the Civil Station a watertight compartment ; the Bund and Swimming Bath ; a practical joke that failed ; Amusements ; English ladies ; Planters ; Indigo riots of 1863 ; Causes of their ruin ; Life in a Sub-division ; Celebration of Queen Victoria's Birthday ; Fairs ; Theatricals ; Bihar Famine of 1874 ; " Sweet Pea " ; a Leper Camp ; inordinate cost of famine relief ; Inundations and embankments ; a dream materialises.

MAN is essentially a gregarious creature ; he finds the fullest scope for his faculties in close association with his fellows. The City States of Hellas were formed by a process which the Greeks styled *Synœcism*, " adding house to house." No love has ever been lost between townsmen and country folk. The ancient Romans called dwellers outside their walls *Pagani* (from *Pagus*, a village) ; and the early Christians used " pagan " as a synonym for heathen because the new religion made relatively slow progress among dull-witted rustics. Calcutta exemplifies the movement which con-

## RURAL BENGAL IN THE 'SEVENTIES

verts a group of villages into a city; its nucleus was three hamlets on the eastern bank of the Hughli. In 1742 the Council ordered a trench to be cut on the Settlement's vulnerable side, in order to protect it against the Maratha hordes which were raiding Bengal. The "Maratha Ditch" was never completed, but fifty years ago its course could still be traced in parts of Circular Road. There is a flavour of contempt in the sobriquet "Ditcher," which clings to citizens of Calcutta, and they retaliate by referring to provincial Bengal as the "Mofussil" (a corruption of the Arabic *Mfsal*, denoting the interior of a country as distinguished from the seat of its government, *Sadr*, vulgarly "Sudder"). In November, 1870, I became a "Mofussilite," on being transferred to the headquarters of a district on the northern bank of the *Pañna*, which is the main stream of the Ganges, although it lacks the sanctity attaching to the Hughli, a minor branch of the mighty river.

Fifty-seven years ago, all superior appointments were reserved by Act of Parliament for British subjects who had stood highest in a competitive examination held annually in London. After being trained for an Indian career, they were called on to enter into a "Covenant" with the Secretary of State,



## INDIA'S HOPE

which forbade them to engage in private trade. Very few Indians could afford the cost of the journey to England, and in 1871 only one had gained a footing in the Covenanted Civil Service. His fellow-countrymen who stood outside its jealously-guarded pale could reach no higher posts than those of Deputy-Magistrate or Subordinate Judge. But Indians performed the routine duties in every office with marked efficiency, and rumour had it that a humble clerk was "the power behind the throne" occupied by many a highly-civilised civilian. It was only natural that educated Indians should view the European monopoly of office with displeasure. Their feelings were timidly voiced by the vernacular press, and found vent at meetings of the Dharma Sabhas, or Religious Assemblies, which were held in every large town. Thirteen years later the simmering discontent was brought to a head by the then Lieutenant-Governor's ill-judged attempt to limit the right of trial by jury. It gave birth to the Congress movement, to which Indians stand indebted for every political privilege they now enjoy.

I found Bengal studded with "Civil Stations," each governed by Covenanted Civilians. Of these the District Magistrate and the

## RURAL BENGAL IN THE 'SEVENTIES

Sessions Judge ranked as *Bara Sahebs* ; beneath them was the Joint Magistrate, whose functions were mainly judicial, and the covenanted hierarchy was completed by the Assistant Magistrate, styled *Chota Saheb*, who learned his business under the *Bara Saheb's* eye. In the early 'seventies a good many superior appointments were held by men who had entered the service by nomination and had been (very imperfectly) trained for their duties at the East India Company's College. Many "Haileybury Men" were inclined to despise competition-wallahs, but on the whole they treated us very well. Some of them were notoriously incompetent, but the great majority displayed the sterling qualities of the British middle class. European officials in other departments were lumped together as "uncovenanted," and the jealousy aroused by our superior status was expressed by such epithets as "White Brahmin." All the other officials of my first station were in this category. There was a Civil Surgeon who attended "Gazetted Officers" gratis ; and a Superintendent of Police, who owed allegiance to his own Department until Sir George Campbell (Lieutenant-Governor, 1871-4) brought him under the District Magistrate's thumb. The Department of Public Works was

## INDIA'S HOPE

represented by a District Engineer ; but the roads for which he was responsible had lapsed into a parlous state. Lord William Bentinck (Governor-General, 1833-6) was nicknamed "William the Kunkeror," owing to his insistence in ordering roads to be metalled with *Kankar*, or calcareous limestones ; but forty years later his Grand Trunk Road, linking Calcutta with Upper India, was quite useless in the rainy season, and his immediate successors failed to realise that a country's civilisation may be measured by the state of the roads. Sir George Campbell must have taken this dictum to heart. He made local authorities responsible for the upkeep of their roads and provided funds for the purpose by levying a cess *ad hoc* on landed proprietors.

The latter used to pay formal calls on leading Europeans when they visited a Civil Station, and feasted us royally on occasions of ceremony. Here, however, social intercourse between the races ended. That they had once been on friendly terms was proved by the Public Libraries which were to be found at most Civil Stations. But the Mutiny of 1857 was recent history in the 'seventies ; and it left bitter memories which kept Europeans and Indians apart. The daily routine was much the same everywhere. We rose at 6 or

## RURAL BENGAL IN THE 'SEVENTIES

7 a.m., according to the season, and generally had a good gallop on the racecourse. Then we cooled our limbs in the Station Swimming Bath, whither our servants had preceded us with a change of clothes. I recollect a funny incident occurring at this rendezvous. Practical joking has happily gone out of fashion, but in the 'seventies it was considered capital sport—by the joker. While we were disporting ourselves in the water one morning, a colleague of mine pointed to his bearer, who was standing at the edge of the bath, and whispered: "Just see what a shock he'll get!" Then, creeping stealthily behind the old man, he pushed him into deep water. This cruel trick evoked loud laughter, which rose to shrieks when the victim spluttered out, on emerging, "I've got master's watch in my pocket!"

Our evenings were generally spent in promenading the Bund, an embankment which protected the town from inundation, while ancient dance-music was rendered by the Station Band, under the direction of an ex-mutineer. This dreary form of recreation was varied by an occasional croquet party—lawn tennis was not imported until 1874—which enabled bachelors to enjoy the society of the fair sex. In those days flying visits to England

## INDIA'S HOPE

were unheard of, and the journey to Darjiling involved a trek by palanquin through the fever-haunted Terai. At my first station no fewer than six European ladies were content, or compelled, to share their husband's sufferings in the hot weather and rainy seasons.

The non-official community consisted of Europeans engaged in producing indigo and raw silk. Most of the "Indigo Concerns" were owned by wealthy British firms, whose policy it was to acquire an interest in land in order to force their tenants to deliver the raw material at prices which were far below the cost of producing it. During the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, Erskine sought to excuse his high-handed action by admitting that our Indian dominions had been won by the "Knavery and strength of civilisation." Such was undoubtedly the case with Bengal indigo concerns prior to the famous riots of 1863. They were started by the disclosures of a European missionary named Long, whose pamphlet entitled *Nil Darpan*, "The Mirror of Indigo," incited the ryots to rise against their oppressors. A Commission, headed by the future Sir Ashley Eden, upheld Mr. Long's indictment, and means were taken to check the worst abuses. To place the manufacture of indigo on a sound economic basis was quite

## RURAL BENGAL IN THE 'SEVENTIES

impossible. Eastern Bengal has a natural monopoly of the production of jute, which is yearly exported to the tune of £54,000,000. Things are far otherwise with indigo and raw silk. Both industries have been killed by the competition of more favoured countries and the discovery of artificial substitutes. In the early 'seventies, however, few signs of the approaching catastrophe had made their appearance. The European planters were a cheery set, much given to hospitality and sport. The race-meetings which enlivened Christmas and New Year at most Civil Stations owed everything to their patronage.

After spending two unhappy years as a *Chota Saheb*, I received charge of a subdivision situated in the heart of an Indigo District. My social intercourse with the Planters left little to be desired; but as an official I was sorely handicapped by the lack of advice and support from my superiors. With the Indian community my relations were uniformly cordial. Realising that the proper function of a government is to make people happy, I took the lead in celebrating Queen Victoria's Birthday by feasting the rich and feeding the poor. With the aid of an Indian Committee I started annual fairs, to which many thousands flocked from far and

wide. Bengalis have marked dramatic gifts, and their language lends itself to poetic expression. I afforded scope to this hidden talent by building a temporary theatre, in which vernacular plays and operas were rendered by an amateur company. The dullness of life in the country is responsible for the litigation and the faction-fighting to which Bengalis are addicted. My attempts to relieve it were seconded by Hindus and Moslems alike. In those peaceful days there was no sign of the "theological hatred" which politics has brought in its train; and the aggressive puritanism preached by Wahabi missionaries met with scant response.

Early in 1874 the failure of the Monsoon brought a shortage in the food crops of Western Bengal. The Bihar Famine which supervened was vigorously tackled by Sir Richard Temple. He imported mountains of rice into the distressed region, segregated the diseased and helpless in concentration-camps, and strengthened the Bihar cadres at the expense of Bengal. I was transferred on famine duty to the Gaya District, where I came under the sway of a Magistrate-Collector belonging to a type which has long been extinguished. Owing to his tyranny and caprice he was commonly known as "Sweet Pea," a nickname

## RURAL BENGAL IN THE 'SEVENTIES

suggested by the first letter of his patronymic. He placed me in charge of a vast collection of huts mainly tenanted by lepers, whose tortured bodies displayed every species of deformity. Happily for myself I was not doomed to live in this inferno. The task of feeding the poor wretches devolved on a Eurasian Deputy-Magistrate, who contracted leprosy. It used to be said of the pre-war English that they "dearly loved a big butcher's bill," i.e. they measured a victory by the list of killed and wounded. Sir Richard Temple knew that the same principle applied to financial operations. He poured out money like water ; every ryot who owned a bullock-cart had the time of his life, yet orders came by wire to double transport charges which were already exorbitant. Subsequent inquiries have proved that the distress in Bihar had been grossly over-estimated, and that 50 per cent. of the £12,000,000 spent on relief went into the wrong pockets.

On returning to my Bengal sub-division, I found the cultivators battling with an inundation from two tributaries of the Ganges which was submerging their autumn rice. Thousands were raising mud embankments, while thousands more busied themselves in harvesting the threatened crop. Their efforts



came too late. In a day or two the whole country became a lake, from which the villages stood out as islands, raised on the débris left by past generations. I had no difficulty in persuading the ryots to deal systematically with a recurrent danger. They worked with a will to protect their crops during the ensuing cold season, which is always a slack time in agriculture. When, in September, 1875, the rivers again rose in flood they were kept within due bounds by neatly turfed embankments. Never shall I forget the thrill of joy I felt on riding along these stout protective works. On one side I saw a torrent of swirling water, while on the other, far below, a wide expanse of grain was ripening in perfect safety. But the Department of Public Works did not approve of any amateurish tampering with the Delta's drainage. I was told by telegram that an hydraulic engineer had been placed on special duty to report on my embankments. Three days later there arrived from the Punjab a thin, sad-looking person named Long, whom I piloted over the new embankments on the north of my sub-division. We became great friends, and our evening talk wandered far from professional topics. After telling me with a sigh that he had lately lost a dearly-loved wife, he went on: "One

## RURAL BENGAL IN THE 'SEVENTIES

morning a week ago my old bearer came to me and said, ' Saheb, I had a curious dream last night. The Mem-Saheb appeared to me and whispered " Shadu, tell your master that he's going to be sent to Bengal and that he'll meet me there." ' Now I had not the remotest idea of any such transfer ; but within a couple of hours I got a wire ordering me to report myself to the D.P.W. Secretariat in Calcutta, and here I am. So the first part of Shadu's dream has come true. I wonder what the rest of it means? " After exchanging futile conjectures we made plans for a journey southwards, but at the last moment I got news of a threatened riot in the opposite direction. We, therefore, parted company, and Mr. Long set out alone for the camp that had been pitched for us. Next day I heard to my grief that he had succumbed to an attack of cholera.

In 1877 Madras experienced famine on a far greater scale than anything I had seen in Bihar. I wrote, offering my services to H.E. the Governor, with whose family mine was connected. In a week's time I was transferred on famine duty to the Southern Presidency, and did not return to my dear old Province until the end of 1881.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EXPANSION OF ENGLAND

The Indian Empire of to-day ; Dyarchy ; a Nation in the making ; Hindrances ; Effect of soil and climate on human beings ; the English a mixed race ; Anglo-Saxons and self-government ; the Norman Conquest and Sea-Power ; Conflicting ideals ; Social Service inculcated by religion, but undermined by the Reformation ; Invention of Book-keeping by Double-entry favours Commercialism ; Discovery of the Cape Route ; a race for wealth ; the East India Company founded ; Characteristics of the English Race ; opinion of contemporaries.

It used to be said in my youth that, when the English evacuated India, they would leave nothing behind them except empty beer-bottles and derelict railway embankments. The gibe has lost whatever force it once possessed. India is now invested with all the paraphernalia of a modern empire. Railways, roads and irrigation canals have banished the incubus of famine which still oppressed her in the 'seventies. Disease is fought with every weapon forged by science. Higher education is within the reach of the humblest ryot ; and the English language has supplanted Urdu as a vehicle for exchanging thought throughout the vast peninsula. But I need not ex-

## THE EXPANSION OF ENGLAND

patiate on the benefits which India derives from her connection with England. Suffice it to add that her noble codes of law will survive when all other evidences of foreign rule shall have passed away.

For ages unnumbered India was severed from the rest of the world by mountain barriers and stormy seas. Her isolation is a thing of the past. For good or for evil she has been brought within the vortex of spiritual forces which are moulding her course of civilisation. Chief among these is the Democratic ideal, which asserts the indefeasible right of every citizen to take part in the duties of government. It inspired the experiment made nine years ago, when England conceded to India every political privilege which her own sons had won after seven centuries of struggle with arbitrary and personal rule. The bonds that linked her with Whitehall were relaxed; the foundations of parliamentary government were well and truly laid. Englishmen have done their utmost to make the new Constitution a reality. It was the great Napoleon's aim to give everyone a "career open to talents": and his ideal has materialised in India. Who in the 'seventies foresaw that fifty years later a Bengali barrister would be raised to the Peerage and

## INDIA'S HOPE

govern a province? It needs but a decade of cordial co-operation on the part of Indian races to weld them into a self-governing nation. Unhappily for the world's future, ignorance and prejudice stand as lions in the path of political progress. To take part in the task of slaying them is the ambition of an old man who longs to see a perfect understanding achieved between Indians and Englishmen ere he joins the great majority.

The influence of a country's soil and climate on the formation of national character has long engaged the attention of students, but this subject gives rise to problems which have hitherto defied solution. Why, for instance, do European families long settled in the United States of America exhibit many characteristics of the Red Indian aborigines; and why do the children of English settlers in South Africa become sturdy Afrikanders? No such mystery attaches to the causes of England's greatness. Her people are of mixed descent. The racial warp was given by the advent of certain Teutonic tribesmen who colonised the island after the departure of its Roman garrison. They were stolid, drunken and barbarous, but possessed a strong sense of citizenship; the germs of representative government existed in England long before the Norman Conquest.

## THE EXPANSION OF ENGLAND

The west consisted of Scandinavians who came from a huge peninsula lying between 55° of Northern latitude and the Arctic Circle. Their habitat was unsuited to agriculture; but survivors in the struggle with niggard Nature became vigorous, enterprising and quick-witted. Setting forth in galleys from the fiords which indent their coast, these Northmen or Normans founded principalities on the Mediterranean littoral and in Northern France. The invasion of England by William Duke of Normandy marks an era in the world's history. His followers found a comparatively genial climate and a soil which favoured the production of wool. Wealth poured in, affording the sinews of dynastic warfare; and a coast-line longer than that of any European country gave them command of the sea. Then began a clash between opposing ideals which endures at the present day. The Catholic religion which then prevailed throughout Europe enjoined good works as a means of attaining salvation; and the conception of citizenship which had taken root in Saxon England was a further incentive to labour for the common weal. The ideal of Social Service shone brightly in the Middle Ages. Towards the close of that era human energy received another orientation from the invention of

## INDIA'S HOPE

book-keeping by double entry, which revolutionised the mechanism of foreign trade. Its author, an Italian Jew, belonged to a race which had always been devoted to money-getting. Its ruling passion infected Western Europe, and appealed with special force to Englishmen. Now, all commerce consists in taking advantage of other people's necessities. Those who pursue are apt to disregard the interests of their human instruments and of the community at large. Moreover, the morality of men leagued together for purposes of gain is in inverse ratio to the numbers so associated. Commercialism spread to the Church of Rome, provoking a violent reaction from reformers who sought to purge religion of its taint. But the basic theory of the Protestant Reformation declared the acceptance of specified doctrines to be the sole passport to Heaven ; and the ideal of social service suffered a long eclipse. Commercialism received a mighty impetus from the discovery of the Cape route to India, and the maritime nations of Europe started on a race for the monopoly of Asiatic trade. It was won by England by virtue of her superior resources. The creation of the East India Company in 1600 is another landmark in history ; but the Merchant Adventurers who obtained a charter

of exclusive privileges from Queen Elizabeth's government were anything but empire-builders. They came as suppliants for a share of Indian trade to the throne of the Emperor of Delhi, and their successors were forced by the instinct of self-preservation to take up the sceptre which fell from his feeble hands. Commercialism forged the links which bind India to England, and the empire which rose on foundations unwittingly laid by a trading company retains many features of the counting house at this day. The influence of Commercialism was seen in the warfare which absorbed England's energy during the eighteenth century, in the supersession of cottage industries by machinery, and in the wholesale corruption which was bred by wealth wrung from the people of India. There was some truth in Napoleon's indictment of the English as "a nation of shop-keepers," and Benjamin Disraeli had good grounds for saying that they "had stopped short at comfort and called it civilisation." The eighth Earl of Elgin, renowned as a diplomatist and Viceroy of India, had cause to lament "the extension of the area over which Englishmen could exhibit the hollowness of their civilisation and their Christianity." Glancing back on the chequered course of the Empire's history, one is c



## INDIA'S WORK

pelled to admit that progress, in the true sense of that much-abused word, was retarded by the mastery of Commercialism. But the ideal of Social Service revived at the eighteenth century's dawn, and bore fruit in the formation of leagues without number for promoting social betterment. Its momentum is daily gathering strength, and it bids fair to solve many a problem that vexes the modern world.

Nations learn little from one another except their peculiar vices ; and Indians are inclined to judge the English race without weighing its solid virtues in the balance. The time is opportune for an attempt to review its qualities without pride or prejudice. Englishmen cherish the liberties which their forebears won after an age-long struggle with absolutism. They are law-abiding, and eager to support legitimate authority. They are humane ; English revolutions have been accomplished without bloodshed and English mobs are proverbially tender-hearted. They love manly games, which teach the immense value of teamwork and a chivalrous regard for fair-play. They reverence tradition, and stand fast on ancient ways ; hasty legislation is exceptional in their Parliament, and ill-considered schemes seldom materialise. Their enterprise has made a little island set on

northern seas the hub of a world-wide empire, which gives fair promise of becoming a Society of self-governing Nations. Their steadfast courage stood the acid test of the most terrible war in history, and enabled them to overcome a General Strike, which would have plunged other countries in anarchy.

No human being and no institution devised by man can be flawless ; and a regard for justice compels me to add shadows to my picture. Englishmen lack imagination ; and very few of them possess the faculty of comprehending other people's aspirations. This defect has far-reaching consequences. It explains the genesis of the British Empire ; for conquest and a capacity to sympathise stand at opposite Poles. It precludes Englishmen from foreseeing future contingencies. In replying to a letter from William Wilson Hunter, of *Gazetteer* fame, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen wrote :

John Bull is a well-meaning giant, but very nearly blind. *Me judice* it would be well worth our Government's while to create a special historical or intelligence department, that we might have some idea of the natural consequences of our actions.

The Englishman's conservatism too often becomes a " toleration of intolerable things," and his pride of race breeds a thinly-veiled contempt for all foreigners. He is inclined to

## INDIA'S HOPE

draw a colour line, and maintain rigid caste-distinctions; but both characteristics are seen in all countries inhabited by races of Aryan descent, and both are rapidly disappearing. In appraising the qualities of a great people, one must take account of the opinion held by contemporaries who are able to regard it from an objective standpoint. Edmund Burke had a keen sense of the injury done to Ireland by English commercialism, and yet he paid a tribute to the "ancient and inbred integrity, piety, good nature, and good humour of the English." Despite the mutual antipathy engendered by centuries of dynastic warfare and commercial rivalry, a patriotic Frenchman has recently declared that: "England stands as an example to the world by her moral qualities, her generosity, her initiative, and her devotion to the interests of mankind."

Indians may surely accept British guidance in endeavouring to weld the myriad races of their country into a self-governing Nation.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BENGALI INTELLIGENTSIA

Origin of the Bengali race ; a cataclysm in Central Asia ; Aryan migrations ; a branch settles in the Gangetic Delta ; depressing effect of its climate ; the Moslem Conquest ; Bengal becomes a province of the Mughal Empire, but passes to the East India Company ; defenceless on the West ; ravaged by Maratha hordes ; the Borgis ; its immense value for England ; the Bengali character ; a lovable race, their response to sympathy, public-spirited ; their intellectual gifts ; their vernacular. Official honesty depends on salary ; an ingenious method of securing bribes ; judicial purity ; Defects of Bengalis ; causes of " Unrest " ; the Western Leaven at work ; spread of feminism ; origin of the Purdah or veil ; Self-devotion of Bengali women evidenced by " Suttee " ; their intellectual qualities and business capacity ; opinion of a Persian Princess on the emancipation of women.

THE origin of the Bengali race is wrapped in mystery ; but most ethnologists place it in Central Asia. Long before the dawn of history a race, or races classed as " Aryans," occupied the country between the rivers Amu Darya and Sir-i-Darya, which now forms part of Russian Turkestan. About the sixteenth century B.C. the globe's surface in that region began to rise. That the Caspian and the Sea of Aral once formed part of the Polar Ocean is proved by their fauna ; slowly they shrunk

## INDIA'S HOPE

to their present dimensions, and the rivers that discharged into the Northern sea flowed in diminished volume. Driven from Central Asia by the desiccation of their pasture-grounds, the Aryans trekked westwards and southwards in quest of fresh fields. One swarm was held up in the Caucasus, for mountain ranges always call a halt to human migrations. Others poured into Europe, to become the ancestors of our Slavs and Teutons. Others made their way into India, probably through the comparatively level country which now constitutes Afghanistan and Biluchistan. The Aryans met with fierce resistance from the dark-skinned aborigines, but finally drove them into the mountains or reduced them to slavery. They found Bengal a land which was in process of being won from the sea by riverine action. A tropical climate and a soil which is yearly fertilised by alluvium favoured the accumulation of wealth. The warrior-caste established powerful Kingdoms, and the priests developed a system of philosophy which ranks with the profoundest speculations of the ancient Greeks. But torrid sunshine and the ravages of malaria kept human energy at a low ebb. Bengal has no physical defences on its Western borders, and its inhabitants have always succumbed to invasion. The first

conquest which history records was achieved by the sword of Islam in the thirteenth century of the Christian era ; and three hundred years later Bengal became a province of the Mughal Empire. Akbar's enlightened régime crumbled away under his successors, and received its death-blow from the Emperor Aurangzib's intolerance. The provincial Governor threw off his allegiance to Delhi, and established a short-lived dynasty which gave way in its turn to the East India Company's rule. Appalling, indeed, was the condition of Bengal throughout the eighteenth century. Maratha hordes overran the Delta, plundering its miserable inhabitants ; and only fifty years ago Bengali mothers were wont to quiet their fractious children by whispering *Borgi ashibe*,—"the Marathas are coming!" The strong arm of Great Britain alone protects Bengal from foreign invasion and internal anarchy. The province proved of immense value during the era of struggle and consolidation. Its revenues enabled the East India Company to carry on the warfare in which it was involved, and to pursue the policy of annexation which was forced upon it. Sixty years ago Sir George Chesney declared, in his *Indian Polity*, that Bengal was "the one part of India worth retaining were the rest to go." His words

apply with tenfold force at the present day.

Races of Aryan descent have many characteristics in common and, despite wide differences in physical environment, a curious similarity is apparent in certain phases of their evolution. This is especially the case with Bengalis, whose kinship with ourselves cannot be gainsaid. Having spent twenty years in Bengal and maintained close relations with that Province since my retirement, I may claim a deeper knowledge of its people than any cold-weather visitor can possess. I have no hesitation in affirming that the Bengalis are a lovable race, quick to discern sympathy in an Englishman and eager to serve him with devotion. They have a long memory for acts of kindness; when I am reminded that there is no word for "gratitude" in their vernacular I always ask: "What have *you* done for their welfare?" Injuries and insults leave a lasting impression on their minds. I told the penultimate Governor of Bengal that his reputation would be made or marred by his speech and action during the first six weeks of his rule. In addressing a London audience eight months ago, another ex-Governor said that he had found no traces of public spirit in Bengal. But India, like England, has witnessed a struggle

between the ideals of Social Service and Commercialism. Innumerable tanks, temples and bridges stand as evidence that the Indians of old time performed good works as a means of accumulating religious merit. They now support a vast army of paupers without the compulsion of poor rates. As I remarked in a previous chapter, the first symptom of impending famine is given by wandering paupers who can no longer depend for existence on private charity. Noble gifts for public objects are of daily occurrence in Calcutta; and institutions designed to promote the welfare of women, children and even animals, are being founded in increasing numbers. It must be admitted that clever Bengalis learn many "tricks of trade" from their European masters; develop a keen commercial sense, and amass large fortunes in business.

They are a highly gifted race. The pandits of Nadiya and of Puri—now, alas, severed from Bengal—have long been famous for their profound knowledge of Sanskrit, a dead language which is for Hindus all that classical Greek means for Europeans. The Bengali vernacular is a true daughter of Sanskrit, and has inherited its amazing flexibility. With due cultivation it would have found expression in a noble literature; but *ninety years ago*,



English became the official language of British India. Bengalis speak and write our difficult tongue with remarkable purity ; and in point of intellectual capacity they are fitted to play a leading part in regenerating their country. But ability divorced from character is always used without any regard for the interests of the community. Have Bengalis in general an abiding sense of their duties as citizens? In other words, are they honest and truthful?

Until the close of the eighteenth century, the East India Company's European servants drew nominal salaries, but were allowed—nay, encouraged—to engage in commercial speculation. Lord Cornwallis, who was Governor-General from 1786 to 1794, realised that honesty depends on official remuneration. He, therefore, framed a generous scale of salaries for the Civil Service, but prohibited trading ; with the result that it has been a model of integrity ever since. Its example has reacted on Indians in the lower grades of the judicial and executive services ; and the standard of honesty is incomparably higher in British India than in other Asiatic countries. Such was not always the case. During the Mughal era every official was open to financial arguments, and in Bengal itself judicial honesty has been a plant of slow growth. During the

'seventies a District Magistrate in Bihar visited a town on the Ganges which was, and still is, the favourite abode of many Indian pensioners. One of these veterans celebrated his arrival by illuminating the streets and feeding a host of mendicants. On calling to bid him farewell the Magistrate said, " Well, Babu, I am much obliged for the *tamasha* (display) you gave in my honour ; but tell me, how do you manage to live in such grand style? You have a palatial bungalow with many servants, and last night's festivities must have cost you a pretty penny. All this can't be done on your pension ; have you discovered the Philosopher's Stone which turns base metal into gold? " " Sir," replied the old man, " you are a real *Saheb*, and I hear you are soon leaving India for good, so I'll reveal the secret of my fortune if you promise not to give me away." On receiving assurances on this point he continued':

About thirty years ago I was transferred, as a young Munsiff (the lowest grade of the judicial service) to the Panjab, which had then been recently annexed. A few years later I was promoted Subordinate Judge, and vested with powers to try all civil suits. I was now in a position to increase my official income, which never exceeded Rs. 600 a month (£720 p.a.), but great circumspection was necessary. You know, sir, that we Bengalis have a great regard for family ties, and when one of us obtains a well-paid post, his poor relations swoop down on him : his house is full of hangers-on and all his transactions are closely watched. Things were quite different in a city

## INDIA'S HOPE

fifteen hundred miles from home; there one had nothing to fear from newspapers or anonymous letters. So I thought out the following scheme, and followed it until my retirement. I used to examine my cause-list daily, and whenever I found an important suit set down for hearing on the morrow, I sent an old servant named Ram Das, after nightfall, to the *plaintiff and the defendant*, with a verbal demand for Rs. 1000 (then £100) in cash, which was gladly paid. I then decided their case on its merits, and sent Ram Das with Rs. 1000 to the losing party. Neither plaintiff nor defendant had any cause of complaint, and I was able to save up a comfortable addition to my official income with perfect impunity.

Cheap railway fares have brought the Panjab closer to Calcutta than Burdwan was seventy years ago, and render the repetition of such devices impossible. But there is no reason to suspect the survival of similar abuses; and the purification of the public services ranks among the noblest achievements of the British Raj. Nor is the standard of truthfulness in Bengal much lower than that which obtains in England. Human nature is fundamentally identical in all Aryan races: and the hard swearing that prevails in their Divorce Court should forbid Englishmen to sit in judgment on Indian witnesses. I am far from asserting that all Bengalis are paragons of virtue. Marsh-snakes of the genus represented by Macaulay's Nuncomar are not uncommon, and the annals of Indian courts of law reveal many a case of subtle villainy. Long ages of subjection have left their mark

on the Indian character. Bengalis, in particular, suffer from the "inferiority complex," dread responsibility, and cling to a stronger nature than their own. Neo-Malthusian doctrines have made no progress in Bengal; and despite a high death-rate its central districts are terribly over-peopled. The University turns out year by year an altogether excessive supply of graduates; and Indian students who complete their education in Europe return home with distorted notions of English life. Thus a huge semi-educated proletariat has come into being, and thousands of young men find that their costly training will not provide them with curry and rice. They are as clay in the hands of the Bolshevik potter, and absorb the lies of incendiaries who attribute India's poverty to alien rule. But the Western Leaven is at work throughout Asia. Young Bengal is breaking the trammels of caste, and shows scant respect for the rigid ceremonies of orthodox Hinduism. The age for marriage is rising, and Bengali women are longing to escape from their seclusion.

This dates back to the Moslem conquest. Knowing the fierce passions that seethe in the Arab's breast, the Prophet Mohammed ordained that women should lead a sequestered life at home and wear thick veils in public.

The Hindus were forced to follow their conquerors' example ; and until recent years the *purdah*, or veil, was obligatory for women of the superior castes. There are good reasons for believing that Bengali women are intellectually on a level with their men-folk. They certainly share the spirit of self-devotion and self-sacrifice which animates their English sisters. The custom of *Sati* (vulgarly "Suttee") which enjoined that widows should immolate themselves on their husbands' funereal pyres, claimed more voluntary victims in Bengal than in any other part of India. On the rare occasions when a Bengali woman has reached a position of authority, she has proved eager and able to fulfil all the duties which it entails. The Rani Bhabáni of Nattor towered above her contemporaries in the eighteenth century ; and during the Victorian era, the Maharani Surnamayi of Kasimbazar was famed for her able management of vast estates and for her boundless charities.

But a custom so ancient and so firmly established should not be lightly cast aside, and the opinion recently expressed by a Persian Princess should carry weight with Indian feminists. She said :

I fully realise that the veil must disappear, but personally I will never drop it. Our girls may be brought up

## THE BENGALIS

without the veil; but to allow grown-up women to appear in public unveiled would be dangerous and unsettling. Lack of self-control is our greatest defect; we have very few of the deeply-rooted inhibitions which keep the corresponding classes in Western countries more or less straight.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME DETRACTORS—LORD MACAULAY AND MISS MAYO

Macaulay's estimate of the Bengali character is based on hearsay evidence and Nuncomar is not a fair sample of his race. Macaulay's partiality and disregard for truth. Why the Bengalis are not a martial race; benefits conferred on India by Macaulay; his Penal Code and the adoption of English as the official language outweighed by the evil effect of his diatribes. *Mother India* considered; Miss Mayo is not qualified to pose as a critic of Indian civilisation. Source of the religious instinct; origin of Tantric Hinduism and Kali-worship; their mystical import passes European comprehension; Hindus have always been tolerant. *Mother India* gives a false impression of the Bengali character. Its sinister effect in England and America; alleged outrages on children. Mr. Gandhi's opinion, Miss Mayo likened to a Sanitary Inspector, but India's sewers are not India; let us, however, set our house in order; Vituperation exasperates but it cannot reform; *Mother India* tends to preclude cordial co-operation between Englishmen and Indians.

GREAT injustice has been done to the Bengali race by writers who knew little or nothing of their inner life. Lord Macaulay was a notable offender in this respect. During his residence in Calcutta he contributed a series of brilliant essays to the *Edinburgh Review*—which, by the way, were set in galley-proofs at a local Press. Their eloquence, glitter and antithesis made

## SOME DETRACTORS

a profound impression on English readers, and every young civilian took them as a model for prose composition. In defending Warren Hastings, Macaulay assailed the Bengalis with extreme violence. His indictment was evidently based on an imaginative study of the manifold iniquities perpetrated by his hero's enemy, Nizam-ud-Daula, who, as I have remarked, was by no means a fair specimen of his race, and on hearsay evidence gleaned from colleagues who were kind of persons like himself. But Macaulay's imagination, and even his veracity may be questioned. As a historian he viewed national events through the spectacles, and idealised the characters of 1688. At a dinner given by the London Authors' Club in the June of 1857, before the great Oxford Dictionary was published, the evening assured us that a large percentage of the authorities quoted in Macaulay's History of England had proved to be altogether fictitious.

Considerations of space prevent me from mentioning all the allegations made by Macaulay against Warren Hastings. His charges against the charge of corruption, for example, are widely different from the charges against healthy Bengalis made by the same writer. They were made by Macaulay in the same manner.



land, and their cricketers stand up to fast bowling without leg-pads. If they are not a martial race the reason must be sought for in their environment. They inhabit a land

Which Nature either drowns or burns ;  
A desert and a swamp by turns.

It has been stated on good authority that 77 per cent. of them are chronic sufferers from malaria, and its sequelæ. Moreover, the ravages of the anopheles mosquito and the hookworm have increased of late years, owing to the obstruction of the Delta's ancient drainage caused by our railways and embanked roads.

It must be admitted that Lord Macaulay's brief stay in India was fruitful in good results. The noble Penal Code is commonly ascribed to him ; but he had an able collaborator in Sir Barnes Peacock, Chief Justice of Bengal. Its definitions of offences and its examples of their application bear the stamp of Macaulay's genius. The language question was hotly debated during his tenure of office as Legal Member. Some of his colleagues urged that Sanskrit and the vernaculars should be exclusively cultivated ; while others held that English ought to be the official language of British India. The Orientalists were soundly beaten, thanks to Lord Macaulay's eloquence,

## SOME DETRACTORS

and there are now few that regret the issue of the struggle. But against the benefits which he undoubtedly conferred on India must be set the evil wrought by his scathing attack on the Bengalis. Only after living in their midst for more than a decade was I able to conquer the prejudice engendered by the *Essay on Warren Hastings*.

In the same category stands Miss Katherine Mayo, whose *Mother India* has made so profound an impression in three continents. She had heard the English administration of India violently attacked by platform orators in the United States, and journeyed thence to Calcutta with the laudable intention of seeing things for herself. Her good faith cannot seriously be called in question, but here again we detect the evil results of superficial knowledge. To speak with authority on an ancient and alien civilisation demands years of sympathetic study and an intimate acquaintance with the language in which its various phases find expression. Miss Mayo possesses neither qualification. Her notions of Indian life were gleaned during the cold weather of 1925-6, and her scathing exposure of its defects is to a very large extent based on statements made by people who share her incapacity for forming an unbiassed judgment. The British Govern-

ment rightly insists on its officers observing strict neutrality in matters of religion ; and foreigners ought to realise that they are skating on very thin ice when they venture to impeach a cult which is professed by many millions of their fellow-creatures.

The religious instinct arises from man's sense of his dependence on an unseen Power, whose nature and workings transcend his comprehension. Regarding Wagner's music, Mr. H. R. Haweis wrote :

It reflects the ever-recurrent struggles of the human heart—now in the grip of inexorable fate, now passion-tossed, at war with itself and time—soothed with spaces of calm, flattered by dreams of ineffable bliss, filled with sublime hopes—and content at last with far-off glimpses of God.

Such is the source of the religious instinct, and all its manifestations are worthy of respect, however repellent they may seem to the Western mind. I have no intention of posing as a champion of the Tantric form of Hinduism or of the Kali worship to which Miss Mayo takes such vigorous exception. Neither has any warrant in the ancient Shastras. They originated during the final struggle between Brahminism and Buddhism, in which the priests won a decisive victory by pandering to the lust and blood-thirst of the barbarous Princes who misgoverned India thirteen cen-

turies ago. But things which excite disgust or pruriency in Europeans serve only to exalt the fervour of Hindu devotees, who regard the emblems of birth and destruction from a mystical standpoint.

In the course of his cold-weather tour, an English Magistrate-Collector arrived at a certain city and was cordially welcomed by its inhabitants. He was horrified by some obscene bas-reliefs which figured on the walls of an ancient temple, and learnt that they had been painted afresh in honour of his visit. In reply to his remonstrances the Municipal Chairman said: "Sir, we like to think that when our wives and daughters pass by this temple, their eyes should rest on pleasing and pious objects!" The mentality thus indicated offers insoluble problems to the European, but it is encountered throughout India. One may ask whether an American Puritan is qualified to criticise a cult whose cryptic meaning she is constitutionally unable to grasp. And Hinduism resembles Judaism in being rigidly closed to all who have been born outside its pale. It has never proselytised; its annals are unstained by the tortures of the Inquisition, by holocausts of "heretics," or by hideous and prolonged warfare waged under the banner of religion. Miss Mayo's book

gives a distorted impression of Indian society ; and every abuse that she pillories has its counterpart in her own country.

Dealing with its effect on Western opinion Commander Wedgwood, M.P., told a protest meeting held in London that it left a friend of his—presumably English—in India, “ feeling that he could never respect an orthodox Hindu again,” and that

Another man, a Cabinet Minister, said he could stand anything but those outrages on children. It made him feel that he would like to lead something of a Crusade throughout India for the burning of idols and the chastising of priests.

This Cabinet Minister's attitude is shared by millions in England and America who have been nurtured on the militant creed of the Old Testament. I may add that no “ outrages ” of the sort were brought to my knowledge during twenty years' residence in Bengal. A Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children would find no scope for its activities in that Province. Miss Mayo's diatribes have exasperated Hindus, who see their most cherished beliefs assailed, their women's honour impeached, and the seamy side of their civilisation dragged into the pitiless light of day.

“ Mahatma ” Gandhi's character commands my respect, although I am in complete dis-

agreement with the doctrines which he preaches ; and his opinion on *Mother India* is well worth quoting :

The impression it leaves on my mind is that it is the Report of a Sanitary Inspector, sent out with the one purpose of opening out and examining the drains of the country to be reported on. If Miss Mayo had confessed that she had gone to India only for this purpose there would, perhaps, be little to complain of in her compilation. But she says in effect with a certain amount of triumph, " The drains are India ! " True, in her concluding chapter there is a caution ; but it is cleverly made to enforce her sweeping condemnation. I feel that no one who has any knowledge of India can possibly accept her terrible accusations against the thought and the life of the people of this unhappy country. . . . Whilst I consider the book to be unfit to be placed before Americans and Englishmen—for it can do them no good—it is a book that even Indians can read with some degree of profit. We may repudiate the charge as it has been framed by Miss Mayo, but we may not repudiate the substance underlying the many allegations she has made. It is a good thing to see ourselves as others see us. . . . Overdrawn her pictures of our sanitation, child-marriages, etc., undoubtedly are ; but let them serve as a spur to much greater efforts than we have hitherto put forth in order to rid society of all cause of reproach. . . . The indignation which we are bound to express against this slanderous book must not blind us to our obvious imperfections and our great limitations.

Vituperation is not argument ; and a longing to reform untempered by sympathy gives a new lease of life to abuses which it seeks to eradicate. Convinced as I am that India's future depends on a good understanding on all sides, I deplore the wide publicity given to statements which render co-operation between Englishmen and Indians impossible.

## APPENDIX

### THE AUTHOR AND HIS PANTHER, 1877

*The Dog is a faithful, intelligent friend,  
The Cat will inhabit your house to the end.*

THUS did Mr. Hilaire Belloc express the general opinion that pussy rates her home far above her mistress. One of the Great Felidæ is not open to the charge of selfishness. He abounds in rural Bengal, and is a typical beast of prey, finding sustenance in dogs, pigs, and occasionally children. When food is scarce, his physique becomes attenuated, and we style him "Leopard." Otherwise, and especially when he is well cared for in captivity, he develops in bulk and earns the appellation "Panther."

In the summer of 1872 the Maharaja of Nattor gave me a leopard-cub, whose dam had fallen to his unerring rifle. I despaired of rearing the little creature, which could not have been more than a week old; but I fed him assiduously with milk from a nursery bottle, and when his eyes opened on a cruel world he regarded me as his mother. As he grew older his diet became more substantial,



The Author and his Panther, 1877.





## APPENDIX

and at length he devoured a raw sheep in three days. A room was allotted to him in my bungalow, with a dead tree-trunk embedded in the floor, which he used to lacerate with his formidable claws.

His pet name, "Tippoo," was probably suggested by a full-sized effigy which I had seen at the India Office, representing an English soldier being mauled by a tiger. It had been found in Tippoo Sultan's Palace after the capture of Maisur in 1799. When he was about six months old I introduced Tippoo to an itinerant snake-charmer, whose cobras, with distended hoods, evoked all the symptoms of abject terror. Springing back as far as his chain allowed, Tippoo crouched, snarling, in a corner. As he could not have had previous experience of poisonous snakes, his behaviour must have been due to inherited instinct. At the age of three he attained full growth, and was 7 feet 6 inches in length from tip of tail to jaws. His coat was as soft as velvet, and gazing into his eyes which glowed in the dark, I remembered Blake's haunting lines :

Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
In the forest of the night,  
What immortal hand and eye  
Framed thy fearful symmetry?

I used to take him on a chain for country walks, when the ryots took care to     their

## APPENDIX

cattle at home, for Tippoo regarded every living thing except myself as a quarry. Sometimes we met a "fuing" jackal, which evidently supposed that I was being pursued by a leopard, and that he would come in for my remains. So he sat up, uttering a peculiar cry, as a signal that game was near. In such cases I released Tippoo, who followed me like a dog in decreasing circles; and thus we came within reach of the puzzled jackal. Then Tippoo sprang upon him—and the rest was silence.

Friends often asked me whether I was ever afraid of him? Had I shown any symptom of terror I would certainly have been torn in pieces; and twice I stood in peril from his tremendous jaws. It was my custom to let him loose in my dining-room after the evening meal. One night I was sitting in a heavy rocking-chair, while Tippoo lay asleep on the floor alongside. Suddenly a Venetian blind rattled and, looking round, I saw a hand protruding with a paper, which turned out to be a report of some serious crime. I started up and shouted: "Take care, my leopard is loose!" On resuming my seat I heard an appalling roar and the chair collapsed, depositing me in Tippoo's embrace. I had crushed his paw, and in his agony he had torn off the offending rocker. I

## APPENDIX

would have lost a leg if it had been within his reach!

During my temporary absence from Bengal in March-September 1874, I boarded Tippoo with Jamrach's agent, a sturdy Eurasian named Routledge, who kept wild animals in Bow Bazar. A few days after arriving at Gaya I received a telegram from him, "Your leopard refuses food." I induced "Sweet Pea" (p. 24) to grant me a week's casual leave, and lost no time in journeying to Calcutta. I found Tippoo lying asleep in his cage when I reached Bow Bazar. On hearing my voice he sprang up and thrust his paws through the bars. I gave him my right hand, which he licked furiously in token of joy. Now the tongues of the felidæ are as rough as nutmeg-graters. Fearing that he would draw blood I tried to withdraw my hand, but it was held as in a vice. Routledge shouted, "By Jove, he'll tear your arm off; I'll fetch a gun!" I whispered, "Bring me a thick stick, sharp!" He did so, and I smote Tippoo between his ears. He released my hand and retreated to a corner of his cage, which I entered and sat on his back while he devoured a horse's hind leg.

In the cold weather of 1876 I had Tippoo photographed by an artist, who stood in such